24. The reversible polysaccharide gel prepared by the method of claim 20.

25. A method of preparing a thermally irreversible, high strength gel of a beta-1,3-glucan polysaccharide, which comprises heating above 50° C. the polysaccharide solution of claim 13.

26. A method of preparing a thermally irreversible, high strength gel of a beta-1,3-glucan polysaccharide, which comprises heating above 50° C. the polysaccharide solution of claim 14.

27. A method of preparing a thermally irreversible, high strength gel of a beta-1,3-glucan polysaccharide, which comprises heating about 50° C. the polysaccharide solution of claim 15.

28. A method of preparing a thermally irreversible, high strength gel of a beta-1,3-glucan polysaccharide, which comprises heating above 50° C. the polysaccharide solution of claim 16.

29. The thermally irreversible polysaccharide gel prepared by the method of claim 25.

30. The thermally irreversible polysaccharide gel prepared by the method of claim 26.

31. The thermally irreversible polysaccharide gel prepared by the method of claim 27.

32. The thermally irreversible polysaccharide gel prepared by the method of claim 28.

33. In a method for supporting, separating, transforming or treating biological materials wherein a biological material is incorporated into or placed in contact with a gel medium, the improvement which comprises utilizing as the gel medium the beta-1,3-glucan polysaccharide gel of claim 1.

34. In a method for supporting, separating, transforming or treating biological materials wherein a biological material is incorporated into or placed in contact with a gel medium, the improvement which comprises utilizing as the gel medium the beta-1,3-glucan polysaccharide gel of claim 17.

35. In a method for supporting, separating, transforming or treating biological materials wherein a biological material is incorporated into or placed in contact with a gel medium, the improvement which comprises utilizing as the gel medium the beta-1,3-glucan polysaccharide gel of claim 29.

36. In a method for preparing a gel medium containing a biological material wherein the biological material is incorporated into the gel by dispersing the biological material into a precursor gel-forming solution and thereafter gelling the resulting dispersion by cooling below about 40° C. or heating above about 50° C., the improvement which comprises utilizing as the gel-forming solution the solution of claim 5.

37. A biological product comprising a biological material and a carrier therefor, said carrier comprising a gel of claim 1 in particulate form.

38. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a drug and a carrier therefor, said carrier comprising a gel of claim 1.

39. A biological material having a coating of the gel of claim 1.

40. A disposable contact lens comprising a contact lens shaped gel of claim 1.

* * * * *